

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Lewistown Satellite Airfield Boundary Increase IV

Other names/site number: Lewistown Pattern Gunnery Range; Lewistown Airport/24FR0851

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

## 2. Location

Street & number: Fox Lane, off State Highway 19

City or town: Grass Range State: MT County: Fergus

Not For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☒

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this x nomination     request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property x meets     does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

    national x statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

x A     B     C     D

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property     meets     does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

State or Federal agency/bureau  
or Tribal Government

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register  
☐ determined eligible for the National Register  
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register  
☐ removed from the National Register  
☐ other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private: ☒
- Public – Local ☐
- Public – State ☐
- Public – Federal ☒

##### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s) ☐
- District ☒
- Site ☐
- Structure ☐
- Object ☐

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

Noncontributing

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

buildings

1

\_\_\_\_\_

sites

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

structures

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

objects

1

\_\_\_\_\_

Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 46

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DEFENSE/air facility

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

AGRICULTURE/agricultural field

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

N/A

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property:

Walls: n/a

Foundation: n/a

Roof: n/a

Other: earth

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

### Summary Paragraph

The addition of the Lewistown Pattern Gunnery Range constitutes the fourth boundary increase to the original Lewistown Satellite Airfield Historic District listed in March 2000 (NR# 00000162). Two of the subsequent boundary increases (Lewistown Satellite Airfield Historic District Boundary Increase and Lewistown Satellite Airfield Historic District Boundary Increase II) increased the size of the original listed property, while Lewistown Satellite Airfield Historic District III added the non-contiguous Lewistown Pattern Bombing Range.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lon Johnson, *Lewistown Satellite Airfield Historic District National Register Nomination* (listed March 8, 2000, NR #0000162), on file at the Montana State Historic Preservation Office, Helena, MT; Kate Hampton and Lon Johnson, *Lewistown Satellite Airfield Historic District Boundary Increase National Register Nomination* (listed September 17, 2004, NR# 4000979), on file at the Montana State Historic Preservation Office, Helena, MT; Patrick Rennie, *Lewistown Satellite Airfield Historic District (Boundary Increase II) National Register Nomination* (listed January 17, 2007, NR# 6001247), on file at the Montana State Historic Preservation Office, Helena, MT; Benjamin Miller and Zane Fulbright, *Lewistown Satellite Airfield Historic District (Boundary Increase III) National Register Nomination* (listed March 10, 2010, NR# 10000066), on file at the Montana State Historic Preservation Office, Helena, MT.

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- This boundary increase, the Lewistown Satellite Airfield Historic District Boundary Increase IV, the Lewistown Pattern Gunnery Range, is located approximately 6 miles north of the community of Grass Range and 25 miles east of Lewistown in Fergus County, Montana. The Lewistown Pattern Gunnery Range was used for air-to-ground gunnery training during 1943, serving a vital role in the military's preparation and training of pilots during World War II. The site was placed on inactive status and declared available for agricultural use in October 1944. The leases were terminated between November 30, 1944 and March 1945.

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## Narrative Description

### Lewistown Satellite Airfield Historic District

The Lewistown Satellite Airfield Historic District (and the associated boundary increase and boundary increase II) sits along U.S. Highway 87 about one mile southwest of Lewistown, Montana, in Fergus County. The airfield occupies level ground before the highway drops down into the town. It now serves as the Lewistown Municipal Airport. The original Historic District, listed March 8, 2000, is located in the northwest corner of the airport and includes the six buildings associated with the flight apron functions of the airfield during its period of significance.

In 2004, the original boundary increase expanded the district to include more of the original building cluster. Boundary Increase II identified and nominated all the remaining historic, contributing features within the airfield property, to more fully document the district and convey the historic use of the airfield as a whole. Boundary Increase III includes the discontinuous resources in Petroleum County, namely the Pattern Bombing Range, that contribute to the significance of the military airfield but was not included with the first three National Register nominations.

The current nomination (Boundary Increase IV) comprises a 12-square mile area in eastern Fergus County defined as the Pattern Gunnery Range. The Pattern Gunnery Range, selected for use the same time as the Pattern Bombing Range (Boundary Increase III, NR# 10000066, NR listed 3/10/2010) in 1942, reflects the isolated nature required by the military for such endeavors. Together, these two sparsely inhabited areas of north-central Montana served the essential needs and met the requirements for bombing and gunnery practice. The two served as sister ranges, with each range utilized for a specific type of armament training. While the Pattern Bombing Range occurred in Petroleum County, the Pattern Gunnery Range, the subject of this nomination, is in eastern Fergus County. The remote range country and absence of visible lights at night made the pattern gunnery range ideal for the training missions.

Used as the practice area by B-17 heavy bombardment aircraft crews assigned to Lewistown Army Air Force for air-to-ground gunnery training, the range was used for day and night training missions. Crews took aim at wood frame and canvas targets, placed one mile apart along the flight line.

### Environmental Setting/Selection of the Lewistown Pattern Gunnery Range

The topography of the Lewistown Pattern Gunnery Range is characterized by hills and plains gently sloping from west to east. The highest point is approximately 3,520 feet above mean sea level (amsl) on the western edge of the property. The lowest point is approximately 3,360 feet amsl on the eastern edge of the property where Little Box Elder Creek exits the site. The central portion of the site contains the most topographical variation, with hills and a long bluff just south of Little Box Elder Creek. Vegetation within the Lewistown Pattern Gunnery Range consists mostly of tall grasses, with wildflowers and low bushes in some areas, particularly along stream banks.

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The Lewistown Pattern Gunnery Range is drained by Little Box Elder Creek and Fords Creek, both intermittent streams that divides the site into thirds. Both drainages flow toward the east and eventually join the Musselshell River, a tributary of the Missouri River.

The climate in the Great Plains Region of north-central Montana is semi-arid and is influenced by the orographic effects of the Rocky Mountains to the west and lower mountains to the south, which block incoming moisture. This climate, combined with the topography, and rural nature of the area, resulted in a perfect gunnery practice range.

Non-Environmental Resources

In addition to the all-important physical presentation of the range, the reason for its selection of use, the range at one time hosted a total of ten wood-frame targets, five each placed one mile apart along the two parallel flight lines. An "L" shaped building was also reportedly constructed; unfortunately, no information regarding the size or function of the building has been located. Evidence of use exists in the form of .50-caliber casings. The .50-caliber cartridges most likely used at the Lewistown Pattern Gunnery Range were ball and tracer rounds belted together with metal links. Many of the casings feature "S L" stamped on the base around the top and "4 3" around the bottom designating the location and date the shells were manufactured; in this case, St. Louis, Missouri, in 1943.

Investigations of the Lewistown Pattern Gunnery Range

Several investigations of the gunnery range have occurred since the early 1990s. During a site visit by EA Engineering, Science, and Technology, Inc. in July 1992, the remnants of one wood frame target, several spent .50-caliber casings, and one .50-caliber projectile were observed.<sup>2</sup>

In November 2006, the US Army Corps of Engineers completed an Archives Search Report to assess the presence or absence of evidence of munitions-related activities. Prior to the 2006 Archives Search Report, a site visit occurred on August 23, 1995 by USACE St. Louis District personnel. Although the field visit identified seven .50-caliber cartridge cases within the gunnery range, the team reported "having found no evidence of the original WWII targets or any ordnance or explosives hazard." The report stated that "all information gathered agrees that the only ordnance used in conjunction with this site was small arms .50-caliber ammunition, confirming the use of the range as limited to gunnery activity, and not bombing practice, indicating no overlap in function occurred between the different training activities."<sup>3</sup>

Much of the site remains relatively undisturbed since its use by the military. Land use is dominated by agriculture and cattle grazing (and hunting to a much lesser extent), with the southern acreage used for cattle grazing and the northern acreage cultivated for crop production. Cultivation appears to have occurred by 1953 based on an aerial photograph from that year. More defined fields are visible in photographs from 1986 and later. An "L"-shaped building observed just south of Fords Creek in the 1948 aerial photograph was no longer visible by 1953.

Surrounding land use within a two-mile radius of the pattern gunnery range is primarily agricultural, with some residences. Agricultural fencing is present in some areas within and surrounding the former gunnery range.

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2 Shaw Environmental Inc. Draft Final Site Inspection Report. Lewistown Pattern Gunnery Range. Fergus County, MT. FUDS Property No. B08MT0326. February 2012, p. 4-1.

3 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). Archives Search Report, Findings, Lewistown Pattern Gunnery Range, Lewistown, Montana. November 2006.

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### Integrity

Although .50 caliber shell casings still dot the gunnery range, the absence of the "L" shaped building and silhouette plane targets results in a loss of integrity of materials and workmanship. However, the targets were never intended to be permanent and likely were constructed as quickly and cheaply as possible with the knowledge they were to be destroyed during strafing practice. Similarly, the disappearance from the photographic aerial evidence of the "L" shaped building by 1953 also strongly suggests a temporary structure, possibly wood frame, meant to either be easily moved or dismantled after its period of use.

Metal detecting conducted across the gunnery range has yielded extensive shell casings and links associated with gunnery range use. While there is no structural integrity remaining of buildings and targets, the amount of scattered surface and subsurface shell casings and links warrants a consideration for the retention of integrity of materials since they strongly reflect the function and use of the area for training purposes.

Location, design, setting, feeling, and association are all present. The US Army selected such locations for training operation because of their remote nature and lack of built environment. This gunnery range was intentionally situated in this location because of the low population, lack of developments, and the minor impact on the surrounding communities. The north-south flight paths crossed over minor drainages that allowed the pilots to fly at a relatively level altitude while experiencing some change in contour, so that targets could be placed both on prominent elevations and somewhat hidden behind the slopes.

Today, these aspects of integrity remain the same as during its period of use by the military; cultivation in the northern portion detracts little from the overall integrity. The remoteness, important to the Army for the site's use, continues to yield positive benefits to the area by limiting encroachment from development and maintaining the historic feeling of the range. The landscape and terrain presents much the same today as when used historically by pilots and gunnery personnel honing their skills to use in the European theater during WWII.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☐ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years



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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MILITARY

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**Period of Significance**

1943-1944

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**Significant Dates**

1943

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**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

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**Cultural Affiliation**

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**Architect/Builder**

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Lewistown Satellite Airfield Historic District Boundary Increase IV, also known as the Lewistown Pattern Gunnery Range, is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A at a local and state level of significance for its association with the Lewistown Satellite Airfield and its role as an integral part of the airbase allowing pilots destined for overseas conflict to gain needed experience in air-to-ground gunnery for real war situations. Lewistown Army Air Force was one of three satellite fields of Great Falls Army Air Base, which accommodated the 401st Bombardment Group for the Second Air Force. During military use, the Lewistown Pattern Gunnery Range was used by B-17 heavy bombardment aircraft crews assigned to Lewistown Army Air Force for air-to-ground gunnery training. The addition of the Lewistown Pattern Gunnery Range to the district addresses the final chapter and completes the full story of the activities associated with the Lewistown Satellite Airfield Historic District.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

**Establishment and Training at B-17 Airbases**

*Much of the information for this section comes directly from Bill Callahan's National Register nomination form for the Fairmont Army Airfield in Nebraska.<sup>4</sup>*

In 1934, the Boeing Aircraft Company of Seattle, Washington, began construction of a four-engine heavy bomber. Known as Boeing model 299, it first took flight on July 28, 1935. The government ordered production of 13 of these aircraft, and then designated it the Y1B-17. Delivery of these first production models occurred from January 11 to August 4, 1937. By the end of the 1930s, the eruption of World War II in Europe led the United States to increase its military production. Although World War II began for the United States in December of 1941, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Department of War had been preparing for war for several years. By the summer of 1940, the Army Air Corps planned for an enormous expansion of combat aircraft training facilities. By September 1940, the President's Advisory Commission to the Council of National Defense had begun collecting information about potential sites for locating air training facilities throughout the country.<sup>5</sup>

Construction of Army Air Force (the Army Air Corps became the Army Air Forces in June 1941) training fields was part of a truly massive construction program by and on behalf of the U.S. military just before and during WWII. Immense facilities sprang up within weeks where none before existed. These facilities were located all over the United States. Thrown in among the army and navy training facilities, shipyards, jeep, bomber and tank factories were ammunition plants, ordinance depots and Army Air Force training facilities. These facilities were located throughout the central section of the country, and were among the physically largest of the World War II facilities, often requiring the requisition of thousands and even tens of thousands of acres of agricultural land.<sup>6</sup>

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4 Bill Callahan, *Fairmont Army Airfield National Register Nomination* (listed March 11, 2003, NR #03000105), on file at the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office, Lincoln, NE.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

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The immensity of scale and rapidity of completion of WWII facilities nationwide is very difficult to overstate. All over the nation, land was acquired for the construction of industrial, military and support facilities meant to train and arm a vast armed force necessary to fight a land, sea and air war on two fronts. The construction of Army Air Corps airfields illustrates the spectacular feat of construction and organization on the American home front. In 1939, the Army Air Corps operated seventeen airfields in all of the United States. By late 1945, the Army Air Force had nearly 800 airfields in the continental United States.<sup>7</sup>

WWII marked the first time in history that strategic aerial bombing of enemy military and industrial facilities was attempted in any significant way. With a few important exceptions, airplanes were a largely untested and, in some quarters, controversial weapon of war. Much of the controversy regarding use of the airplane as a weapon centered on whether strategic bombing was an effective means of waging war. However, many authorities in the United States military observed the effectiveness of air power in Germany's role in the Spanish Civil War and in the Japanese subjugation of much of China. These observations led to the urgent development of many very effective types of military aircraft, and none more so than the heavy bomber.<sup>8</sup>

Four-engined bomber aircraft, such as the Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress and the Consolidated Vultee B-24 Liberator, were largely experimental weapon systems prior to WWII. Technologies that allowed these (for the time) behemoths to fly thousands of miles and strike enemy targets with remarkable precision were cutting edge. Consider that in 1941, passenger airlines were in their infancy and that heavier-than-air powered flight had been invented less than 40 years before. Strategic bombing tactics (which included flying in large formations), navigation systems, targeting systems, high-altitude survival mechanisms, support systems and, of course, simply learning to fly the aircraft as part of a crew were all components of a vast, untested and unproven strategic combat system. Very young men, often with no more than a high school education, were trained in this system from 1941 to 1945 and were expected to master all the new technologies and tactics within a few weeks and perform in the most difficult, stressful and deadly conditions.

In 1942, Major General Robert Olds, commanding officer of the Second Air Force, laid out the precise purposes of the B-17 bomb squadron training fields:<sup>9</sup>

1. Take men individually trained in the delicate art of bombing and weld them into a combat team that works as one man. Particular stress is laid on the ability of this united team to take a four-engine bomber to any target within maximum range, day or night, fair weather or foul, over land or sea, bomb the objective successfully and present the maximum defensive fire power necessary to ward off attacks by enemy pursuits enroute.

2. The organization and training of heavy bomber squadrons and groups is next in line and here special stress is laid on the close coordination of members of combat crew teams to produce essential mass tactics.

3. The trained and organized groups are given a finishing period of training from dispersed airdromes in close simulation of actual conditions encountered in each of the many combat theaters in which American air forces are operating in the second World War today.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> "New Bombing Range for Flying Fortresses. This Area Located 12 Miles North of Winnett," *Lewistown Democrat-News*, December 17, 1942.

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The B-17 received the name "Flying Fortress" from a Seattle reporter who commented on its defensive firepower. The B-17 underwent a number of improvements over its 10-year production span. Throughout the War, the B-17 was refined and improved as battle experience showed the Boeing designers where improvements could be made. The final B-17 production model, the B-17G, was produced in larger quantities (8,680) than any previous model and is considered the definitive "Flying Fort." With its thirteen .50-caliber machine guns -- chin, top, ball and tail turrets; waist and cheek guns -- the B-17G was indeed an airplane that earned the respect of its combatants. In addition, air crews liked the B-17 for its ability to withstand heavy combat damage and still return its crew safely home. Between 1935 and May of 1945, 12,732 B-17s were produced. Of these aircraft, 4,735 were lost during combat missions.

Four 1,200 horsepower engines roar to life as the three-bladed propellers begin to turn. They spin faster, gaining speed with each revolution, yearning their pilot to ease the plane forward to takeoff into the expansive sky.<sup>10</sup>

The Lewistown Satellite Airfield in coordination with the main Army Air Corps base at Great Falls and the other satellite airfields at Glasgow and Cut Bank trained crews to operate the B-17. A spokesman for the Army's Second Air Force command said that, "The crews at the four fields will be engaged in regular training flights to check on the accuracy of navigators and to promote teamwork among the crews. Much of their time will be devoted to practice bombing." The dispersed airfields permitted simulation of conditions in combat zones. One person compared flying over Central Montana with its lack of clearly identifiable landmarks to flying over blacked out England. Another Army spokesman explained "Many of the flights will be in precise formation, simulating battle conditions, when ships must be so spaced as to cover one another with guns." The skies over Central Montana were filled with B-17s flying between the airfields, partaking in bombing practice, and testing long-range navigation skills.<sup>11</sup>

Aircraft from Lewistown, Great Falls, Glasgow, and Cut Bank would take off at a predetermined time, form up in squadron formation over their respective locations, and later, over Central Montana, join in group formation. These bombardment groups, including Lewistown's 615<sup>th</sup> Bomber Squadron, went on to participate in decisive raids over Germany, opening the door for Allied daylight precision bombing. The Montana-trained squadrons flew a total of 1,263 combat missions, dropped 71,128 tons of bombs, lost 548 aircraft, and shot down 1018 enemy aircraft without ever turning away from a mission.

Implicit in the success of the bombing raids during the War, was the Lewistown Pattern Gunnery Range's role in protecting the B-17s, many which were fitted with the top secret Norden Bombsight.<sup>12</sup> These young men earned Presidential Unit Citations with valor and fortitude over Leipzig, Oscherslaben, Regensburg, Schweinfurt, Steyr and Zwickau. Assigned to the Mighty 8th and 15th Air Forces, the courage and bravery of airmen from this Montana airfield continues to bring pride and distinction to the area and nation as a whole.

Lewistown Pattern Gunnery Range (Lewistown Satellite Airfield Historic District Boundary Increase IV)

Gunnery training averaged eight months. Initial training occurred at gunnery schools and lasted six weeks. It consisted of both ground range weapons and aerial gunnery firing at towed targets from small

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10 Nucleus Journalist, *B-17 Brings Back a Bit of Base History*, November 17, 2006.

11 "Lewistown Airdrome be Part of Coordinated Maneuvers Area for Fortress Crew Training." Lewistown Democrat-News November 15, 1942.

12 See Benjamin Miller and Zane Fulbright, *Lewistown Satellite Airfield Historic District (Boundary Increase III) National Register Nomination*, listed March 10, 2010 (NR# 10000066), on file at the Montana State Historic Preservation Office, Helena, MT

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trainer aircraft. Assignment to an aircrew occurred next providing the opportunity to train the men to work together and serve as a cohesive unit. After the successful completion of the training schools, the aircrews were assigned to a combat aircraft allowing each crew member to hone their airborne duties.<sup>13</sup>

All the training revolved around the protection of the crewmen's B-17, which went through various improvements over the life of its production. The B-17E ushered in the tail gunner and replaced the bathtub gun housing on the underside of the top gunner's position with powered turrets. By June of 1942, the aircrew of the B-17E consisted of 10 men—four officers and six enlisted men. The enlisted men's duties included the aerial engineer, the radio operator, a tail gunner, a lower turret gunner, and two waist gunners. Prior to the introduction of the allied long-range fighters, the responsibility of protecting their B-17 from the fighter planes of Germany fell to these men; "...without the enlisted aircrew providing protection with their .50 caliber machine guns, the strategic bombing campaign in Europe would have been impossible."<sup>14</sup>

The Second Airforce formalized the ground training program for combat crews in July 1943, consolidating previous memorandum and directives into a single program that established minimum standards for ground school instruction. The need for these minimum standards arose from the demands of preparing for war and the need to prepare replacement crews in as little time as possible; between August 1944 and January 1945, the average life of a heavy bomber crew in Europe lasted only 115 combat days.<sup>15</sup>

The size and requirements for the gunnery range training was detailed by the Airforce. A memorandum on "Precision Bombing and Air-Ground Gunnery Ranges" describes basic Air to Ground Gunnery Ranges for the Second Air Force in 1942.<sup>16</sup> The low-altitude (500-foot) gunnery range was typically at least 2 by 6 miles in dimension with targets consisting of Japanese Zero airplane silhouettes (approximately 35 feet by 35 feet) set up along two flight lines. The flight lines measured approximately 1/8 mile (220 yards) inside the long perimeter edge, with five targets spaced approximately 1 mile apart parallel to each of the flight lines, approximately 600 to 1,000 yards inside the long perimeter edge. The memorandum recommended that "Every effort should be made to follow the layout shown as far as local conditions permit. Terrain selected should be as flat as possible, consistent with other requirements such as using terrain to prevent ricochets from going beyond the limits of the range." The Lewistown Pattern Gunnery Range closely followed these recommendations from the size of the gunnery range, to the target construction, flight line alignment, and most-importantly, to the landscape necessary to make it all work.

The progression of the airfield to its use for military purposes was closely reported on by local papers. A 1942 Lewistown Democrat-News article highlighted the development of both the new bombing range and gunnery range for "Flying Fortresses" in central Montana. Following the discussion of the bombing range, the article mentioned "In addition to the three bombing ranges, a gunnery range has been selected, where practice at strafing ground objects can be had" an important aspect of the crew's training as B-17 aircraft were mounted with 10 to 13 .50-caliber machine guns, operated by gunners on each side of the aircraft.<sup>17</sup> The significance of a gunnery range for use for strafing practice by crews destined for overseas combat was well-articulated as to allow the crews to "present the maximum defensive fire power

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13 SMSgt Timothy L. Fitzgerald, *USAAF Enlisted Aircrew Gunnery Training for Heavy Bombers in WWII*, AFEHRI File 100.048, circa 1996, p. 5-7.

14 SMSgt Timothy L. Fitzgerald, *USAAF Enlisted Aircrew Gunnery Training for Heavy Bombers in WWII*, AFEHRI File 100.048, circa 1996, p. 6.

15 SMSgt Timothy L. Fitzgerald, *USAAF Enlisted Aircrew Gunnery Training for Heavy Bombers in WWII*, AFEHRI File 100.048, circa 1996, p. 7.

16 Headquarters, Second Air Force. 1942. Precision Bombing and Air-Ground Gunnery Ranges.

17 *Lewistown Democrat-News*, December 17, 1942.

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necessary to ward off attacks by enemy pursuits enroute.” Plans moved forward and in February 1943, the Department of the Army acquired land to establish the Lewistown Pattern Gunnery Range.<sup>18</sup> Located in eastern Fergus County, the property was used as an Air to Ground Gunnery Range by units assigned to the Lewistown Army Air Field; it operated as such until October 1943. According to Major J.L. Eaton, commander of the Great Falls air base and the satellite air fields, improvements at the range consisted of wood frame targets, resembling Japanese Mitsubishi Zeros, used for machine gun practice.<sup>19</sup> The range was used for both day and night training missions. Lewistown Army Air Force was one of three satellite fields of Great Falls Army Air Base, which accommodated the 401st Bombardment Group for the Second Air Force.

Over the years, the physical evidence of the targets and building has slowly disappeared. Review of a 1948 aerial photograph found during an archives search, revealed a clearing with ground scars, possible target debris, and an “L” shaped building. By 1953, only the ground scars remained visible in an aerial photograph from that year. A site visit by EA Engineering, Science, and Technology, Inc. on July 30, 1992, noted remnants of one wood frame target, several spent .50-caliber casings, and one .50-caliber projectile. A site inspection in 1995 failed to identify any target remnants. Evidence of the military use of the range still exists however; an inventory in August 1995 identified seven .50-caliber cartridge cases.<sup>20</sup> An additional two shell casing were recovered by the BLM in 2009, and subsequent metal detecting by the BLM and Montana Site Steward volunteers have yielded numerous shell casings and artillery links.

#### *Casings*

The Browning M2 machine gun was the most widely used weapon on the American bomber and fighter planes of WWII. Due to the high demand of ammunition for this gun, many companies began producing the .50 caliber round to keep the supply available.<sup>21</sup> The .50 caliber round measures 5.5" (140 mm) long with seated bullet. The casing alone measures just under 4" (100 mm) long. The primer end of the casing where the headstamp is located is 0.75" (19 mm) diameter. The bullet typically measures 2.25" (55 mm) long with 0.75" (19 mm) seated into the casing, and a bullet diameter of 0.50".

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18 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). Archives Search Report, Findings, Lewistown Pattern Gunnery Range, Lewistown, Montana. November 2006.

19 “Lewistown Airdrome be Part of Coordinated Maneuvers Area for Fortress Crew Training,” *Lewistown Democrat-News*, November 15, 1942.

20 Shaw Environmental Inc. Draft Final Site Inspection Report. Lewistown Pattern Gunnery Range. Fergus County, MT. FUDS Property No. B08MT0326. February 2012, p. 4-1.

21 Jerry Penry, “.50 Caliber Headstamps: Manufacturing Marks of WWII,” found at <http://www.nebraskaaircrash.com/50caliber.html>, accessed September 14, 2017.

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Known manufacturers and headstamp codes of companies producing .50 caliber ammunition during WWII include:

DI = Defence Industries Limited - Ajax, Ontario, Canada.  
DM = Des Moines Ordnance Plant - Ankeny, Iowa.  
FA = Frankford Arsenal - Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.  
K = Kynoch Works - Witton, Birmingham, England.  
KS = Kelly Springfield, Allegany Ordnance Plant - Cumberland, Maryland.  
LC = Lake City Army Ammunition Plant - Independence, Missouri.  
LM = Lowell Ordnance Plant - Lowell, Massachusetts.  
M = Milwaukee Ordnance Plant - Milwaukee, Wisconsin.  
RA = Remington Arms - Bridgeport, Connecticut.  
SL = St. Louis Ordnance Plant - St. Louis, Missouri.  
SR = Royal Ordnance Factory - Spennymoor, United Kingdom.  
T = Tikkakoski Arsenal - Finland.  
TW = Twin Cities Ordnance Plant - Minneapolis, Minnesota.  
U = Utah Ordnance Plant - Salt Lake City, Utah.  
UT = Utah Ordnance Plant - Salt Lake City, Utah.  
WRA = Winchester Repeating Arms - New Haven, Connecticut.

Headstamps identified at the Lewistown Pattern Gunnery Range indicate munitions used derived from the Des Moines Ordnance Plant in Ankeny, Iowa, Remington Arms in Bridgeport, Connecticut, St. Louis Ordnance Plant in St. Louis, Missouri, and the Twin City Ordnance Plant in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

*Links*

Links, formed pieces of steel that interlock and join the .50 caliber casings together into a linked belt, were produced in the same mass quantity as the brass casings since every casing requires one link. Similar to casing, links often provide identifying marks of manufacturer and die number. Those that were stamped and used during WWII could be directly traced back to the company making them and to the specific die. This was very important since the links needed to work perfectly to efficiently feed the .50 caliber shells into the machine guns. If a jam occurred, and the link was found to be the cause, the problem could be traced back and corrected at the specific manufacturing location.<sup>22</sup>

Finding steel links in good condition can be difficult due to corrosion from the soil. Although the links found at the gunnery range tend to be corroded, identification of several manufacturers is possible and include Fedders Manufacturing Company in Buffalo, Firestone Rubber & Metal Products – Akron Plant, Fort Pitt Bedding of Pittsburg, and National Stamping Company.

The metal flats for the links were pressed out of hardened high-tensile spring steel. The steel used for the links is slightly less than 1/16" thick. The flattened length measures 5 1/4" and the width 1 7/16" on the area that slips over the casing.<sup>23</sup>

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22 Jerry Penry, ".50 Caliber Links: Manufacturing Marks of WWII," found at <http://www.nebraskaaircrash.com/50caliberlinks.html>, accessed September 14, 2017.

23 Ibid.



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**Image Showing Links Surrounding Casings. From <http://www.nebraskaaircrash.com/50caliber.html>.**

#### Ownership History

The property comprising the Lewistown Pattern Gunnery Range was acquired by the Department of the Army in February 1943. At that time, 4,099.24 acres were leased from six private owners, 3,109.00 acres were acquired by use permit from the Department of the Interior, and 40 acres were removed from public domain. The acreage reported in the Archives Search Report totals 7,248 acres.<sup>24</sup> The site was placed on inactive status and declared available for agricultural use in October 1944. The leases for the privately-owned land were terminated on November 30, 1944. The land acquired by use permit was relinquished to the Department of the Interior on March 23, 1945. The public domain land was relinquished to the Department of the Interior on March 21, 1945. Currently the property is owned by the United States (managed by the Bureau of Land Management), the Fox Grain and Cattle Co., and the Fords Creek Hutterite Colony.

#### Boundary Increase IV Significance

On the runways, taxiways, and hardstands, as well as over the bombing and gunnery ranges, crews learned the intricacies of the unwieldy B-17s. The magnitude and layout of these resources is indicative of the size of the airplanes and the amount of property and space needed for effectual intense training sessions by the crews. While little above ground evidence remains of the actions that occurred at the gunnery range, the importance of the 12-square mile area to the preparation and success of the bomber units that played a vital role in the outcome of WWII cannot be overstated. The Lewistown Pattern Gunnery Range is significant for its direct role in the preparation of gunnery crews aboard the B-17 heavy

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24 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). 2006a. Archives Search Report, Findings, Lewistown Pattern Gunnery Range, Lewistown, Montana. November 2006.



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bombardment aircraft assigned to Lewistown Army Air Force who served in WWII bombing missions Europe. The property within the proposed Boundary Increase IV completes the significant story of the airfield district by recognizing all aspects of the district. Here, the essential gunnery training runs of the crews occurred. Although the Lewistown Pattern Gunnery Range is only one piece of the overall district picture, the role it played in the preparation of the aircrews likely saved innumerable U.S. and allied-forces lives during World War II bombing missions.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

- Callahan, Bill., *Fairmont Army Airfield National Register Nomination*, on file at the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office, Lincoln, NE, 2002.
- Department of Defense (DoD). Defense Environmental Programs Annual Report to Congress Fiscal Year 2010, Munitions Response Site (MRS) Inventory, 2010,  
<http://www.denix.osd.mil/mmpr/mrsi/mmpr-detail/?compId=9799&state=MT&ffidee=MT89799F064200> .
- Fitzgerald, Timothy L. (SMSgt), *USAAF Enlisted Aircrew Gunnery Training for Heavy Bombers in WWII*, AFEHRI File 100.048, circa 1996.
- Hampton, K. and L. Johnson, *Lewistown Satellite Airfield Historic District Boundary Increase National Register Nomination*, on file at the Montana State Historic Preservation Office, Helena, MT, 2003.
- Headquarters, Second Air Force, Precision Bombing and Air-Ground Gunnery Ranges, 1942.
- Johnson, L., *Lewistown Satellite Airfield Historic District National Register Nomination*, on file at the Montana State Historic Preservation Office, Helena, MT, 1999.
- Lewistown Democrat-News*, May 6 and 25, 1942; June 16, 1942; July 3, 13, 29, and 31, 1942; August 7, 20, and 25, 1942; October 8, 14, 17, and 18, 1942; September 3, 1942; November 1, 15, 16, and 26, 1942; December 11, 17, and 31, 1942; January 2, 13, 20, and 26, 1943; September 4, 1943.
- Miller, Benjamin R. and Zane Fulbright, *Lewistown Satellite Airfield Historic District Boundary Increase III National Register Nomination*, on file at the Montana State Historic Preservation Office, Helena, MT, 2009.
- Nucleus Journalist, *B-17 Brings Back a Bit of Base History*, November 17, 2006.
- Penry, Jerry. .50 Caliber Headstamps: Manufacturing Marks of WWII, accessed September 14, 2017,  
<http://www.nebraskaaircrash.com/50caliber.html>.
- Penry, Jerry. .50 Caliber Links: Manufacturing Marks of WWII, accessed September 14, 2017,  
<http://www.nebraskaaircrash.com/50caliberlinks.html>.
- Rennie, Patrick, *Montana Cultural Resource Inventory System Form Update, 24FR851*, on file at the Montana State Historic Preservation Office, Helena, MT, 2004.
- Shaw Environmental Inc., *Draft Final Site Inspection Report. Lewistown Pattern Gunnery Range, Fergus County, MT*, FUDS Property No. B08MT0326, 2012.

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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). *Archives Search Report, Findings, Lewistown Pattern  
Gunnery Range, Lewistown, Montana, 2006.*

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
  - ☐ Other State agency
  - ☐ Federal agency
  - ☐ Local government
  - ☐ University
  - ☐ Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 7343 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                        |                        |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 47.157270 | Longitude: -108.862860 |
| 2. Latitude: 47.156960 | Longitude: -108.821690 |
| 3. Latitude: 47.098760 | Longitude: -108.821930 |
| 4. Latitude: 47.099110 | Longitude: -108.863460 |

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Or

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☐ NAD 1983

- |             |           |           |
|-------------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: 12 | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 2. Zone:    | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 3. Zone:    | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 4. Zone:    | Easting : | Northing: |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The Gunnery Range occupies land in Township 16 North, Range 23 East, in Sections 5 through 8, 17 through 20, and 29 through 32. The site boundaries match current section boundaries.

The acreage provided for the Munitions Response Site Inventory in the Defense Environmental Programs Annual Report to Congress Fiscal Year 2010 under Federal Facility Identification Number MT89799F064200 is 7,343 acres.<sup>25</sup> This area is obtained from the current US Army Corps of Engineers geographic information system (GIS).

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary includes the entire property used historically as the gunnery range, measuring two miles wide (E-W) by six miles long (N-S).

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Zane Fulbright/Archeologist  
organization: UDSI Bureau of Land Management, Lewistown Field Office  
street & number: 920 NE Main Street  
city or town: Lewistown state: MT zip code: 59457  
e-mail: zfulbrig@blm.gov  
telephone: 406-538-1923  
date: September 14, 2017

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<sup>25</sup> Department of Defense (DoD), *Defense Environmental Programs Annual Report to Congress Fiscal Year 2010, Munitions Response Site (MRS) Inventory, 2010*, <http://www.denix.osd.mil/mmrp/mrsi/mmrp-detail/?compId=9799&state=MT&ffidee=MT89799F064200>.

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## Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location. (Winifred West)
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

## Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

## Photo Log

Name of Property:

City or Vicinity:

County:

State:

Photographer:

Date Photographed:

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of \_\_\_\_.

*See Continuation Sheets*

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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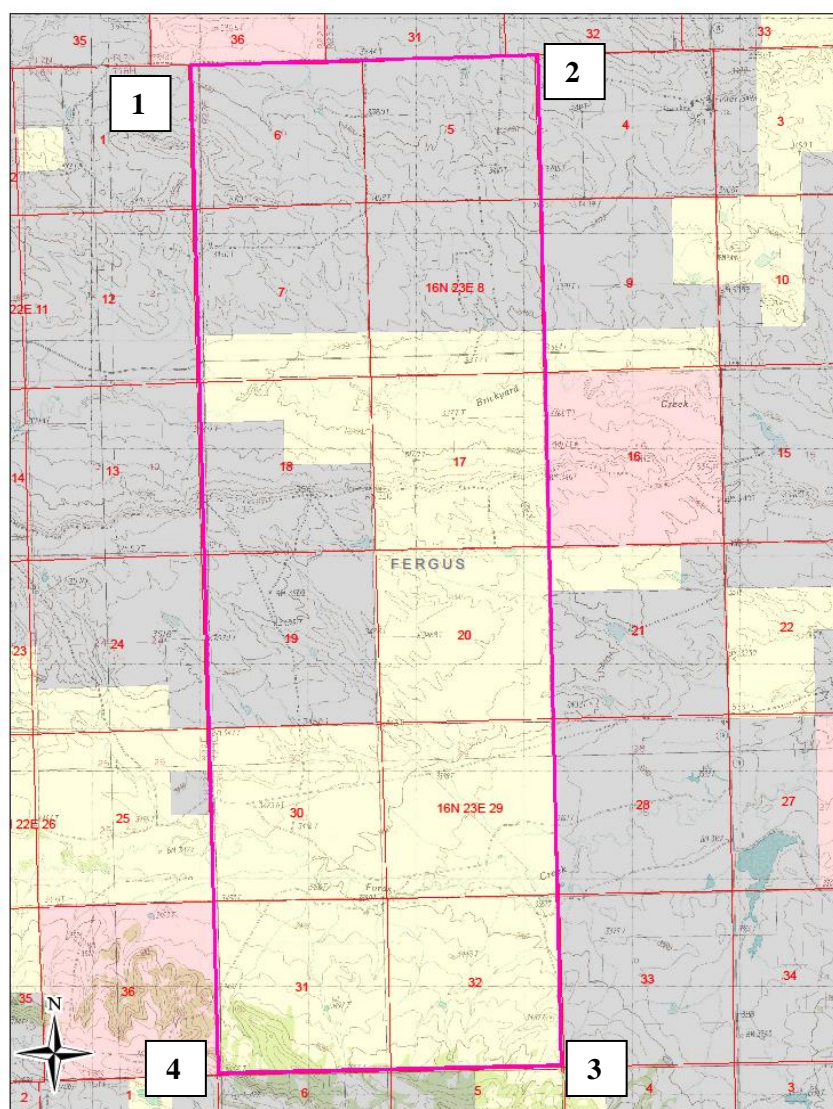
Fergus County, MT

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## Legend

Lewistown Pattern Gunnery Range

Lewistown Pattern Gunnery Range

7.5 min quad Grassrange NE  
T 16N, R 23E, Sect. 05, 06, 07, 08, 17, 18,  
19, 20, 29, 30, 31, 32

0 0.3 0.6 1.2 Miles  
1:30,000

**Location of Lewistown Satellite Airfield Boundary Increase IV, Lewistown Pattern Gunnery Range showing legal locations. Found on the 7.5' Grassrange NE quad map.**



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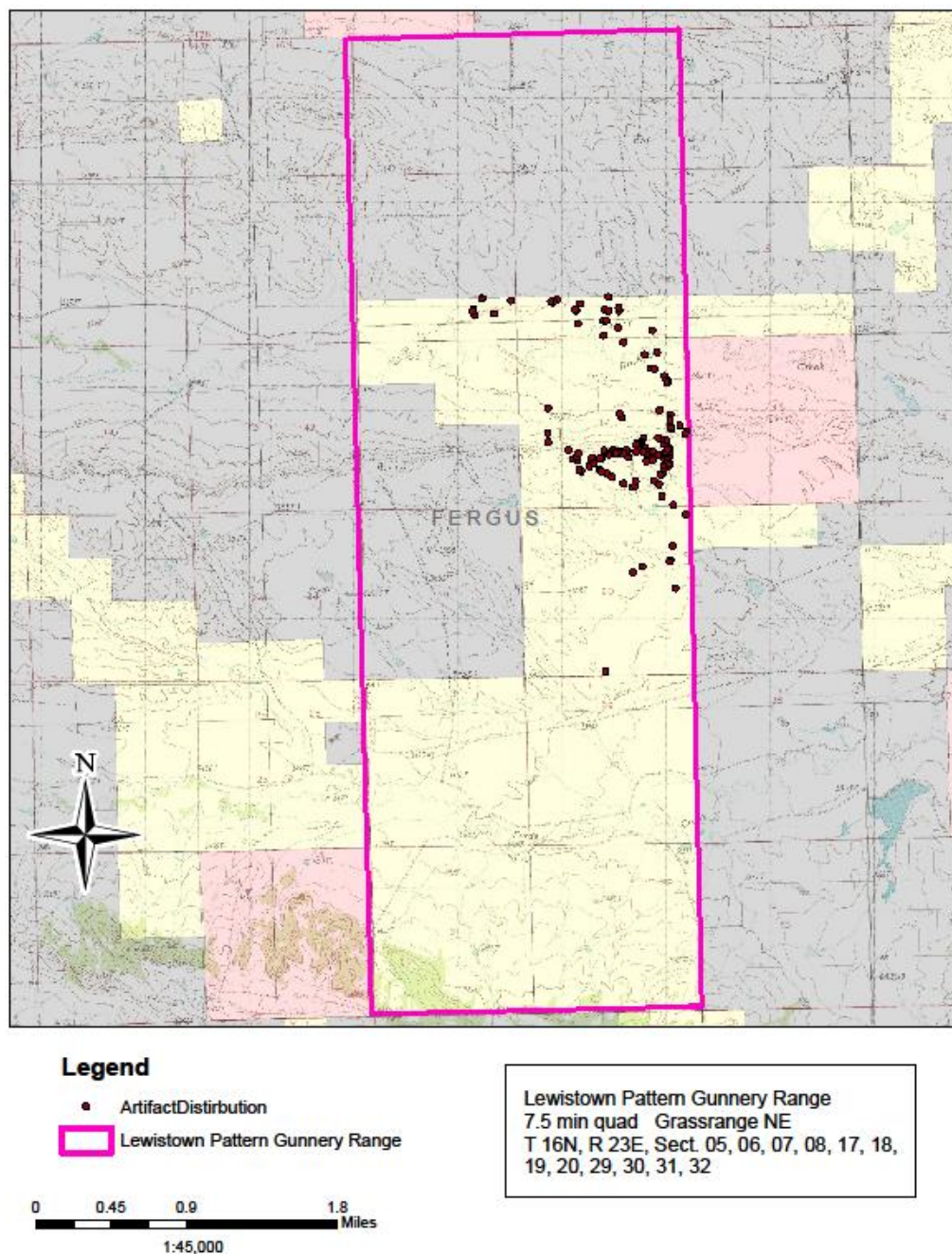
Fergus County, MT

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Artifact Distribution of the Lewistown Satellite Airfield Boundary Increase IV, Lewistown Pattern Gunnery Range. Found on the 7.5' Grassrange NE quad map.

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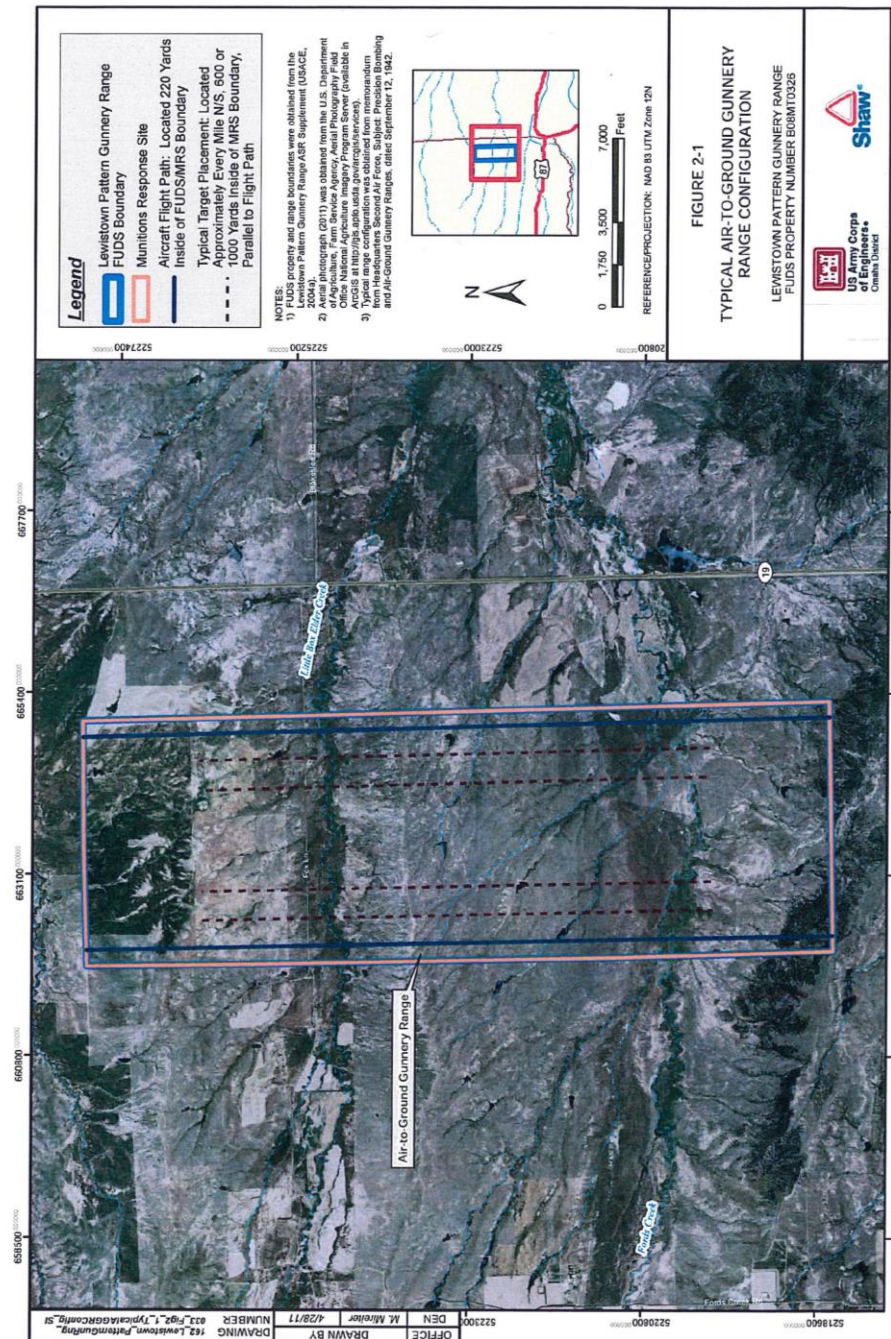
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**.50 Caliber Casing Showing Manufacturing Location and Date Stamp on Bottom**

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**.50 Caliber Shell Casings**

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Typical link found on site. Fedders Manufacturing Company. From  
<http://www.nebraskaaircrash.com/50caliberlinks.html>

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### Photo Log

#### All photographs:

Name of Property: Lewistown Satellite Airfield Boundary Increase IV

City or Vicinity: Grass Range vicinity

County: Fergus

State: MT

Photographer: Zane Fulbright

Date Photographed: Summer 2015

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:



Name of Property: Lewistown Satellite Airfield Boundary Increase IV

City or Vicinity: Grass Range vicinity

County: Fergus

State: MT

Photographer: Zane Fulbright

Date Photographed: Summer 2015

Description and view of camera: From Fox Creek Road looking southeast across gunnery range  
MT\_FergusCounty\_LewistownSatelliteAirfieldBoundaryIncreaseIV\_0001

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Name of Property: Lewistown Satellite Airfield Boundary Increase IV

City or Vicinity: Grass Range vicinity

County: Fergus

State: MT

Photographer: Zane Fulbright

Date Photographed: Summer 2015

Description and view of camera: From Fox Creek Road looking to north end of gunnery range

MT\_FergusCounty\_LewistownSatelliteAirfieldBoundaryIncreaseIV\_0002

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Name of Property: Lewistown Satellite Airfield Boundary Increase IV

City or Vicinity: Grass Range vicinity

County: Fergus

State: MT

Photographer: Zane Fulbright

Date Photographed: Summer 2015

Description and view of camera: From Fox Creek Road looking north to northwest corner

MT\_FergusCounty\_LewistownSatelliteAirfieldBoundaryIncreaseIV\_0003



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Name of Property: Lewistown Satellite Airfield Boundary Increase IV

City or Vicinity: Grass Range vicinity

County: Fergus

State: MT

Photographer: Zane Fulbright

Date Photographed: Summer 2015

Description and view of camera: North end of gunnery range, looking north

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Name of Property: Lewistown Satellite Airfield Boundary Increase IV

City or Vicinity: Grass Range vicinity

County: Fergus

State: MT

Photographer: Zane Fulbright

Date Photographed: Summer 2015

Description and view of camera: Looking south in center of gunnery range

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Name of Property: Lewistown Satellite Airfield Boundary Increase IV

City or Vicinity: Grass Range vicinity

County: Fergus

State: MT

Photographer: Zane Fulbright

Date Photographed: Summer 2015

Description and view of camera: Looking south towards Fords Creek

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Name of Property: Lewistown Satellite Airfield Boundary Increase IV

City or Vicinity: Grass Range vicinity

County: Fergus

State: MT

Photographer: Zane Fulbright

Date Photographed: Summer 2015

Description and view of camera: Looking northwest in gunnery range, Judith Mountains in background.

MT\_FergusCounty\_LewistownSatelliteAirfieldBoundaryIncreaseIV\_0007